

**HB 181**  
**Pupil-Instruction Related Days**

**Support for HB 181**

Good afternoon Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Jerry House and I am the Superintendent for the Whitefish School District. I am here this afternoon to give support for the passage of HB 181. I would like to give a little background, statement of the problem, and give my rationale for supporting HB 181.

**Background**

Schools have typically been required to hold school for 180 days for the purpose of student instruction. With a slight change, some schools are able to hold school less due to the aggregated hours allowing them to meet less than 180 school days. However, most of us are still holding school for the 180 days.

There are an additional maximum of seven days required for Pupil-Instruction Related activities or PIR days. Thus, most districts have a contract with their teaching staff for a minimum of 187 days.

School Laws of Montana 20-1-304 describes those seven days that must be devoted to improving the quality of instruction. The activities may include but are not limited to in-service training, attending state meetings of teacher organizations, and conducting parent conferences. A minimum of three of the days must be designated for instructional and professional development meetings or other appropriate in-service training. Two of the three days must be held in October matching teachers organization meetings.

**Problem**

The seven designated PIR days have become diluted into the following days...start-up days for the beginning of the year, grading and reporting record days, Parent-Teacher conference days, and teacher optional training days conducted prior to the start of school...thus, leaving only one day of district directed professional development.

Recognizing that the above activities are important to the functioning of quality schools, we support legislation to ensure that a minimum of three days are devoted exclusively to teacher training with a focus on proven research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.

**Rationale**

*First:* The single most pervasive factor in education is the classroom teacher. There is abundant research to show the effects that bad teaching has on students in one year's time.

***Second:*** The root source of increasing student achievement is the advancement of classroom teacher competencies to ensure daily proficient instructional performance.

***Third:*** To meet the mandates of No Child Left Behind and to do what is morally and educationally right for students, every classroom teacher must have superior content background and research-based instructional strategies.

By passage of HB 181, our district (and others) shall have two additional (for a total of nine PIR days) state funded days for staff development, requiring mandatory certified staff attendance. The content of these days shall be determined and directed by the local district's School Board of Trustees.

This would make a minimum employee contract 189 days in length based upon a 180-day contract providing student instruction.

In summary, I do encourage your support for the passage of HB 181 that will allow school districts the opportunity to provide quality in-service training for all teachers. The pay-off is directly related to student achievement...and after all, that is our purpose, our mission, and our moral responsibility.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the State of Montana.

May I answer any questions...